

The President's News Conference

August 31, 2020

The President. Thank you very much. I'd like to begin by saying we've just closed out another month of stock market. We had the best stock market—Dow—in 36 years. That's very impressive. So people are very happy with their 401(k)s and with the stocks that they have. And that's a tremendous achievement: best in 36 years.

Let me begin with a brief update on the China virus. Over the last month, our new cases in the United States have declined by 38 percent. Last week, we announced a breakthrough in testing that will allow us to have over 150 million rapid, point-of-care tests. These tests return the results in less than 15 minutes, and many will be deployed to nursing homes. We're being focusing—we're focusing very strongly on nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other locations that serve high-risk populations. So we're going to have the 15-minute, and less, tests, and we will have 150 million rapid point-of-care tests. That's something.

This evening I am pleased to announce that AstraZeneca vaccine has reached phase three clinical trials. So that's joining another group of vaccines that are very close to the end and, hopefully, approval. In the United States, we're doing things that nobody thought would have been even possible. This is a process that would have taken, in some cases, years, and we did it in a matter of months. Thanks to the efforts of Operation Warp Speed, we remain on track to deliver a vaccine very rapidly, in record time.

I also want to provide an update on left-wing political violence that we're seeing in Democrat-run cities. Under my administration, Federal law enforcement is working with State and local authorities all over the country to comb through hours of video, track down rioters, looters, and arsonists, and bring them to justice. We've just come up with a report that we've arrested a large number of people. It's over 200. And you'll be hearing about that, but they've been arrested in various cities throughout the United States. We're doing it very low key, but we're trying to help cities. They are, in all cases, Democrat-run, but we're doing the best we can to help them without really much of a consent.

We'd like to have the consent, as an example, in Portland. We could solve that problem in approximately 1 hour, but the mayor refuses, perhaps for political reasons. I don't know why it's good for him to have a city that's falling apart and that's under siege now for 94 days. But, really, it's been under siege for years, if you know Portland.

So, to the mayor, I say: Whenever you're ready, let us know. We'll solve your problem of violence. We'll solve your problem of crime. We'll arrest those criminals very rapidly, and you'll be able to have some nice evenings in Portland.

The Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice are announcing a joint operation center to investigate the violent, left-wing civil unrest. And again, in Portland alone, the Federal Government has already taken care of and arrested 100 rioters, just in that one city. The wave of violence and destruction that we've seen in recent weeks and months has occurred in cities exclusively controlled and dominated by the Biden—Joe Biden party. If you take a look, the top 10 in the country are Democrats; it's Democrat-run cities, and it's a shame, and it can be solved so easy. It can be solved very easily.

The violence is fueled by dangerous rhetoric from far-left politicians that demonize our Nation and demonize our police. We have to allow our police to do what they're very good at

doing. We've taken that power away. They're afraid to lose their pension, their job, their everything. They're afraid to be destroyed.

You saw this when left-wing extremists attacked law-abiding citizens attending the Republican National Convention at the White House, including Senator Rand Paul and his wonderful wife Kelley. What they went through, but other people went through it too. And that was done very systematically. That was done on purpose. They knew we were having the convention, and they wanted to do everything they could to disrupt it. And the good news is, the public is very wise to it. They see what's happening, and they're wise to it, and I think they are probably acting accordingly.

Left-wing rioters are repeating the same false narrative about America that you hear about, the—really, you hear this from people—what they're saying, how they're saying it—the violence, it's terrible. And again, it's Democrat politicians. I don't know that they're spurring it on, or they're afraid to stop it. But in any event, we're there to help. We're there to get things under control.

What they did on Thursday night at the White House, just outside of the White House, to people that came from all over the world is a disgrace. It's a disgrace. And frankly, the mayor—Democrat mayor, Mayor Bowser—should have done a better job. She did a very poor job. But at the same time, we had the police, who were very brave. They helped Rand. I guess, it started off with two, and they took a beating, if you can believe this. They really took some heavy hits. One went down, and—but got right up, and two others joined them, and they were able to get Rand and Kelley through.

But it was a terrible, terrible thing to witness. But other people went through similar—not to the extent, in terms of taping. We don't have to the tapes as strong, but some people went through—from what I heard—as bad, or worse.

The violent rioters share Biden's same talking points, and they share his same agenda for our Nation. And even his strange speech today that he made in Pittsburgh, he didn't mention the fact, and he didn't mention the far left. He didn't mention the far left, or, from what I saw, I don't believe he mentioned the word "Antifa." Antifa is a criminal organization, and he didn't mention Antifa thugs, but mostly seemed to blame the police and law enforcement.

He went on, point after point after point. He even talked about those on the right, but he didn't talk about those on the left. And those on the left are the problem, and Antifa is the problem. The rioters and Joe Biden have a side: They're both on the side of the radical left, and that is so obvious.

And until that neutralizes, you're never going to have safe areas in those Democrat-run areas. For months, Joe Biden has given moral aid and comfort to the vandals repeating the monstrous lie that these were peaceful protests. They're not peaceful protests. That's anarchy. That's—you look at the agitators, you look at the looters, you look at the rioters—that's not a peaceful protest.

They keep using the term—it's so nice—"peaceful protest." And behind the reporter, the cities are burning. We could solve it very quickly if they ask us to come in, like we did in Minneapolis and like we just did in Wisconsin, where I'll be going tomorrow. And at least, the Governor asked me if I could, we would—I said, "You've got to get the National Guard." And he finally agreed to even a small number, but they were able to take care of things, and that was about 5 days ago, 6 days ago. And ever since, it's been very good.

Thirteen members of Biden's campaign staff donated to bail and—rioters—they're getting them out of jail. Looters—they got them out of jail. And his running mate, Kamala, urged their supporters to do the same thing. It's outrageous that they're now seeking to shift the blame for the mayhem.

And they really want to put it on the backs of the police. I see it. The police are—there's just a war on law enforcement in this country. And without law enforcement, we wouldn't have a country. We have very talented people; they're not allowed to do their job.

If you give the radical left power, what you're seeing in the Democrat-run cities will be brought to every city in this country. If they have that power, every city in this country could be potentially another Portland or another Chicago, where they've had such problems.

To defeat them, we must jail lawbreakers, and we must defeat their hateful ideology about this country, about America. We must teach our children that America is an exceptional, free, and just nation worth defending, preserving, and protecting. And that's what we want to do.

They want to destroy our country. They're going to destroy our suburbs. But I think I've gone a long way from allowing that to happen. The suburbs are protected, especially with the rule changes that I made. I took them out of the Obama administration; they were going to be made much worse.

What we're witnessing today is a result of left-wing indoctrination in our Nation's schools and universities. Many young Americans have been fed lies about America being a wicked nation plagued by racism. Indeed, Joe Biden and his party spent their entire convention spreading this hateful and destructive message while refusing to say one word about the violence. They didn't even discuss law enforcement, the police. Those words weren't mentioned.

Two words that were taken out were the words "under God"—"under God"—two very important words in the Pledge of Allegiance. In their caucus, I guess they did it twice. They took it out of their Pledge of Allegiance. I heard it the one time, and I said: "That's strange. What's—that's a big"—I tell you, I figured they maybe made a mistake, something happened. No, they didn't make a mistake. Then, they did it later on.

So they took the word—essentially, took the word "God" out of the Pledge of Allegiance. We're not taking the word "God" out of anything. We're not taking it out of our Pledge of Allegiance, and we're not taking the great word "God" out of anything.

At our convention, we highlighted law enforcement heroes and repeatedly emphasized that violence has no place in American political discourse. The left's war on police, faith, history, and American values is tearing our country apart, which is what they want. They think it's good, but it's gotten out of control. They're unable to control this radical-left, crazy movement, but we can control it very quickly—very, very, quickly indeed.

The only path to unity is to rebuild a shared national identity focused on common American values and virtues, of which we have plenty. This includes restoring patriotic education in our Nation's schools, where they're trying to change everything that we've learned. What we've learned—in fact, what most of you have learned, they want to change it. They want to change it for whatever reason—cancel culture—whatever you want to call it.

At the same time, we must strictly and fully enforce our law and have no tolerance for anarchy and no tolerance—zero—for violence. Anyone who breaks the law should be arrested, prosecuted, and punished. This includes targeting law enforcement efforts to focus on Antifa, the left-wing domestic terror organization. The mission of Antifa is to spread terror in the U.S. population with a goal of getting Americans to give up to their agenda. This is how terrorist organizations have always operated.

Biden won't even say the name "Antifa." I don't believe he said it today. He made a speech, and he didn't mention that. He mentioned others, but he didn't mention Antifa. He mentioned law enforcement, he mentioned the police, and—but he didn't mention Antifa. I wonder why. And if

he cannot name the problem, there's no way that he'll solve the problem. You don't name it, you don't solve it.

In fact, Biden would give Antifa exactly what it wants: the far-left policy agenda it's asking for. And if that happened, we don't have much of a country left. If you give violent extremists what they want, the violence doesn't go away; they gain new power to spread the terror nationwide.

Most of our Nation is extremely safe, by the way. You know, you only see the bad. You see Portland and Chicago, and you see what's happened in New York just in a very short period of time. It's horrible what's happened in New York. I love New York; I come from New York. And when I see—4 years ago, I left, and I could see that it was problems under this mayor. He's terrible mayor; one of the worst. I can't say "the worst." I mean, I've witnessed Portland. Hard to top him, but he's certainly one of the worst. And when I look at what's happening in New York, and I look at what's happening in the city, and—so quickly. It happened so quickly. It's a shame.

Biden's strategy is to surrender to the left-wing mob, which is exactly what he's doing—I don't think he even knows what he's doing—and give them control over every lever of power in the United States Government. But when you surrender to the mob, you don't get freedom, you get fascism. That's what happens in all cases. You take a look at Venezuela. Look what—look what's going on there and other places.

Biden is using mafia talking points: "The mob will leave you alone if you give them what you want." That's what it is. "The mob will leave you alone. Give them what you want." But it doesn't work that way, because once you give them, they keep taking, taking, taking.

What happens is, you give and give and give, and you take, and they no longer respect you. And that's what's happened with the Democrats, because I actually think they've lost control of these radical-left maniacs. I think they've lost control, because I don't think they feel that's helping them—when New York and Chicago and Portland, and you look at Oakland, and you look at Baltimore, and you look at so many different places and what's going on there. The top 10 are all run by Democrats, and you can go a lot further down the list than 10.

In America, we will never surrender to mob rule, because if the mob rules, democracy is indeed dead. The reason we're continuing to see violence in left-wing cities today is that liberal politicians, mayors, prosecutors, and judges are refusing to enforce the law and put the rioters in jail. These are rioters. These are dangerous people. These are killers. They kill a lot of people, and they don't even think about it. They wake up the next morning; they don't even think about it.

This is the extreme left's agenda for America: They want to appoint radical prosecutors, judges, and Federal officials who will set criminals free. Their stated plan is to cut police funding, abolish cash bail, close down prisons, reeducate our children, preach left-wing social justice, establish a national sanctuary for criminal illegal aliens, and abolish the death penalty, even for cop killers.

No one will be safe. And, in fact, they want very much to let people in prison—like, as an example, the Boston bomber—they want to let everybody vote. If you're in prison, if you're the Boston bomber, they want you to have a vote. I don't know, I don't think that sells too well.

My administration is a very different approach. We want States to work with us to deploy the National Guard to quell the unrest. All they have to do is call us. We will have the National Guard. We're prepared. We're ready to go no matter where they may call from. Any part of the country—East Coast, West Coast, doesn't matter—we're ready to move immediately, as we did in Minneapolis, as we did—we are ready to move as quickly as you can imagine.

Tomorrow I'm going to a place where we moved very quickly—you know that—in Wisconsin. And we moved very, very quickly. And as soon as we moved, that was the end of that. It was very well behaved.

I'll appoint more tough-on-crime prosecutors, support stiffer penalties and longer jail terms for rioters, and support effective policing methods that are proven to be great crime reducers. When you enforce the law, order follows. And we need order. We need order. You can't have cities run like these cities are run.

They gave a little, then they gave a little, then they gave a little more. And all of a sudden, they've lost these cities, but I'll get them back very quickly. All they have to do is say, "Please come in." As you know, they have to ask—unless we go a much tougher route, which we could, but you don't like to do that—they have to ask you to come in. When they ask me to come in, we'll be there within a matter of minutes.

When I signed the Executive order outlining 10-year prison sentences, as an example, for destroying monuments and statues, it immediately stopped. That was 3 months ago or so. I signed an order, and it said, "Ten years in prison." Ten years if you knock down a statue. It immediately stopped. I mean, to the best of my knowledge, I haven't seen it happening for about that time. They were going to have a big march on Washington. They canceled that march. They said 10 years is too long.

Before the outbreak of left-wing extremism, our strategy produced a historic reduction in violent crime. In the last 2 years of the Obama administration, murder increased 30 percent in major American cities, and we witnessed the largest 2-year nationwide increase in murder in over a half a century.

In the first 2 years of my Presidency, the number of murders went down significantly. Earlier this year, we announced that Operation LeGend, surging Federal law enforcement to cities plagued by violent crime. And we did a lot of it. We did a lot of it very quietly, but we did a lot.

Since the beginning of Operation LeGend, we have conducted more than 1,000 arrests and reduced the murder rate in Kansas City, which is one of the cities we targeted, by one third; got it down 33 percent. In the last month alone, we cut the murder rate in Chicago in half. People don't know that, but we sent them into Chicago without fanfare at all. But we cut it down in half; it's still far too high. And if they'd ask for full help, as opposed to just sending in some very talented people, we'd be able to cut it down to a very low number.

While I am President, we will defend the rights of law-abiding citizens. We will honor the heroes who keep America safe. And we do—we honor our police; we honor our law enforcement.

I have the privilege of having gotten, I guess, most every law enforcement group in the country that I can think of—the sheriffs in Florida—all of them; law enforcement, Ohio, in Texas, North Carolina. I mean, almost no matter where you look, I think I've gotten all of it. We'll have to do a little study so I'm totally accurate, but I would say all of it. And the ones who didn't, I think we have to look at them, where do they come from.

So we've done a real job. We're ready, willing, and able to help these Democrat-run cities that are doing poorly. They have to call and ask. All they have to do is call. They don't even have to put it in writing. We'll put it in writing later. We'll get them in there, and we'll straighten out the city very quickly, whichever city we may be talking about. So those Governors that are responsible for a State that has a city that's got a lot of problems: Call me or the mayor can call me, and we'll be there very quickly.

Tomorrow we're making that trip to Wisconsin. I think a lot of you are going to be going, and it should be very interesting. It should be very interesting. But we're proud of it, because, in 6

days, it's been like a different world. And it took place immediately. As soon as we surged, as soon as we went in, it took place immediately.

Okay, please. Thank you.

Protests and Civil Unrest in Kenosha, Wisconsin

Q. Mr. President, are you giving any consideration—or did you give any consideration to the Governor and mayor's request not to come to Kenosha tomorrow?

The President. No, because Kenosha was something we did a good job on. The Governor didn't want us there. He didn't want the National Guard, as you know. He was very reluctant. But I give him credit because, ultimately, he said yes. And as soon as he said yes, the problem ended.

But I have to see the people that did such a good job for me. And we're meeting with numerous people. And we have tremendous support in the State of Wisconsin. So I promised them, when it all gets taken care of, we'll go.

Q. They expressed concerns though that it could exacerbate tensions and increase violence. Do you give any consideration to that?

The President. Well, it could also increase enthusiasm, and it could increase love and respect for our country. And that's why I'm going, because they did a fantastic job. As soon as I called and told them, "Let's go," the whole problem stopped. That was—what?—6 days ago.

Yes, Jeff [Jeff Mason, Reuters].

Shooting of Jacob Blake, Jr., by Police in Kenosha, Wisconsin

Q. Mr. President, why are you not meeting with the family of Jacob Blake while you're there?

The President. Well, I spoke with the pastor—a wonderful man—the family's pastor. And I thought it would be better not to do anything where there are lawyers involved. They wanted me to speak, but they wanted to have lawyers involved, and I thought that was inappropriate, so I didn't do that. But I did speak with the pastor of the family, who is a fine man, a wonderful man. And I think we had a great talk.

And I may, at some point, you know, do that. But they did have a lawyer that wanted to be on the phone, and I said, "No, that's inappropriate," but I just gave my best regards. But, again, I spoke with the pastor.

Yes, please.

Protests and Civil Unrest in Portland, Oregon

Q. I have a question on coronavirus. But first, you were just criticizing Joe Biden, saying he didn't mention the far left or Antifa during his speech today. You said you wanted to talk about left-wing political violence.

The President. Yes.

Q. But I notice you did not mention that your supporters were also in Portland this weekend, firing paintball guns at people, some form of pepper spray. So do you want to also take this chance to condemn what your supporters did in Portland?

The President. Well, I understand they had large numbers of people that were supporters, but that was a peaceful protest. And paint is not—and paint is a defensive mechanism; paint is not bullets.

Q. It's a paintball gun. It's a bullet.

The President. Your supporters—your supporters—and they are your supporters, indeed—shot a young gentleman who—and killed him—not with paint, but with a bullet. And I think it's disgraceful.

These people, they protested peacefully. They went in very peacefully. And I'll tell you what they're protesting: They're protesting, when they turn on television or read whatever they may be reading, and they see a city like Chicago, where 78 people were shot and 13 died; or a city like New York, where the crime rate has gone through the roof; or a city like Portland, where the entire city is ablaze all the time, and a mayor says, "We don't want any help from the Federal Government."

When these people turn that on and they see that, they say: "This is not our country. This is not our country." That was a peaceful protest, totally.

Q. But it was a supporter of yours, Mr. President——

The President. Okay, go ahead, please.

Q. It was a supporter——

The President. Yes, go ahead, please.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. It was a supporter of yours, Mr. President——

The President. Go ahead, please.

Q. Are you going to condemn the——

Q. No, no, it was a supporter of yours, Mr. President——

The President. Excuse me?

Q. ——who killed someone, who is accused of killing two people.

The President. Excuse me?

Q. It was a supporter of yours. No——

Protests and Civil Unrest in Kenosha, Wisconsin

Q. To follow up on what Kaitlan [Kaitlan Collins, CNN] was saying, are you going to condemn the actions of vigilantes like Kyle Rittenhouse?

The President. We're looking at all of it. And that was an interesting situation. You saw the same tape as I saw. And he was trying to get away from them, I guess; it looks like. And he fell, and then they very violently attacked him. And it was something that we're looking at right now, and it's under investigation.

But I guess he was in very big trouble. He would have been—I—he probably would have been killed.

Q. But do you think——

The President. It's under—it's under investigation.

Use of Force by Law Enforcement Officers/The President's Respect for Law Enforcement

Q. Do you think private citizens should be taking guns—[inaudible]?

The President. I'd like to see law enforcement take care of everything. I think everything should be taken care of—law enforcement.

But again, we have to give our cops back, our police back their dignity, their respect. They're very talented people. They're strong. They're tough. They can do the job, but we've taken it away. We don't want to have—when somebody makes a mistake, he chokes, or—in some cases, you have bad cops, and we have to take care of that.

In other cases, they choke. They're under—they have a quarter of a second—a quarter of a second to make a decision, and sometimes, they make the wrong decision. If they make the wrong decision—you know, if they make the wrong decision in the other direction, they're probably dead. So they choke sometimes, and that goes on the evening news for weeks.

And the thousands and tens of thousands of great things they do, nobody covers that. Nobody writes about that. But if they make a mistake——

And again, the bad cops—everybody agrees they have to be very tough on bad cops. But sometimes you have a cop or a police person who is a good—a good police person, right? Good. But they choke. You know, the timing—and they go through this, and they study this, and they work on it all the time. They literally have a quarter of a second to make some of these decisions. And they make a wrong decision, and it's very devastating.

But I will say this: I honor law enforcement. We wouldn't be here right now if it wasn't for law enforcement. We have to stop this horrible, left-wing ideology that seems to be permeating our country. And basically, it's weakness. It's weakness on behalf of Democrat politicians.

The Republicans, we don't have problems. You take a look at our cities; our cities are doing very well. They're safe. They're secure. I spent a lot of time in Texas, as you know, just a couple of days ago. And I was with the Governor of Texas, Greg Abbott. He was explaining they wouldn't put up with it for a minute. They just don't have the kind of problems that other people have.

Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President——

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:45 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Mayor Edward T. Wheeler of Portland, OR; Democratic Presidential Nominee Joseph R. Biden, Jr., and Vice Presidential nominee Kamala D. Harris; Gov. Anthony S. Evers of Wisconsin; Sen.; Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City; Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who was sentenced to death for his role in the Boston Marathon Bombing on April 15, 2013; James E. Ward, Jr., pastor, Insight Church in Skokie, IL; Benjamin Crump, an attorney representing Jacob Blake, Jr., who was shot multiple times during an encounter with police in Kenosha, WI, on August 23 and was treated at Froedtert Hospital in Wauwatosa, WI; Aaron J. Danielson, a demonstrator who was shot and killed in Portland, OR, on August 29; and Antioch, IL, resident Kyle Rittenhouse, accused gunman in the killing of Joseph D. Rosenbaum and Anthony Huber during a demonstration in Kenosha, WI, on August 25. A reporter referred to Mayor John Antaramian of Kenosha, WI.

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Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Abbott, Gregory W.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bowser, Muriel E.; Crump, Benjamin; De Blasio, Bill; Evers, Anthony S.; Harris, Kamala B.; Obama, Barack; Paul, Kelley Ashby; Paul, Randal H.; Rittenhouse, Kyle; Tsarnaev, Dzhokhar; Ward, James E., Jr.; Wheeler, Edward T.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : National Guard; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Economy, national : Improvement; Health and medical care : Experimental drugs and therapies; Health and medical care : Research and development; Illinois : Gun violence in Chicago; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Law enforcement and crime : Criminal justice system, reform efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Law enforcement officers, service and dedication; Law enforcement and crime : Nationwide civil unrest and violence; Law enforcement and crime : State and community law enforcement agencies, Federal support; Law enforcement and crime : Violence against law enforcement officers, prevention efforts; Oregon : Civil unrest and violence in Portland; Texas : Governor; Wisconsin : Governor; Wisconsin : Kenosha :: Civil unrest and violence; Wisconsin : Kenosha :: Police-involved shooting.

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